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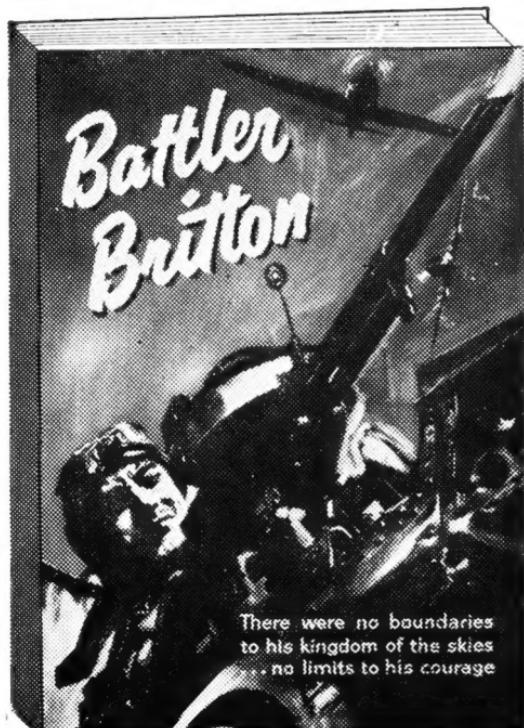
# TIDE OF WAR



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**BATTLER BRITTON**

# TIDE of WAR

FEBRUARY, 1941, SAW THE FALL OF SINGAPORE BENEATH THE SWARMING TIDE OF JAPANESE AGGRESSION. THE NAVAL AND MILITARY MIGHT OF AMERICA AND BRITAIN HAD BEEN HUMBLED BY SUDDEN SAVAGE ATTACKS BUT THERE WAS NO HINT OF SUBMISSION AMONGST THE ALLIES, ONLY A BURNING RESOLUTION TO FIGHT BACK UNTIL FINAL VICTORY BE WON.



# Chapter 1. LAST SHIP FROM SINGAPORE

SHEPHERDING THE MOTLEY FLEET THAT FLED FROM BATTERED SINGAPORE WAS A HANDFUL OF OVERWORKED NAVAL WARSHIPS OF WHICH THE BRITISH DESTROYER, H.M.S. DAGGER, WAS ONE.



ATTACKED BY BOMB AND CANNON-SHELL, SHE FOUGHT GALLANTLY AGAINST RELENTLESS PURSUITERS WHO HAD THE SCENT OF VICTORY IN THEIR NOSTRILS.

THE ATTACKS DIED DOWN, AND ALMOST INSTANTLY, DAGGER RECEIVED FRESH ORDERS. HER FIRST LIEUTENANT, 'RUSH' RUSHTON, R.N.V.R., DELIVERED THE MESSAGE TO THE BRIDGE IN HIS OWN BREEZY STYLE . . .

MORE SHAGGY SHEEP-DOG STUFF FOR THE POOR OLD DAGGER, SKIPPER- WE'RE TO ROUND UP A SHIP STOOGING ABOUT OVER TO THE EAST.



DAGGER'S SKIPPER, COMMANDER G.N. BARKER, R.N., WAS RUSH'S COMPLETE OPPOSITE. A REGULAR RAMROD FOR DISCIPLINE, HE DETESTED HIS LIEUTENANT'S LIGHT-HEARTED MANNER.

NUMBER ONE, YOU WILL ADDRESS ME WITH THE RESPECT DUE TO MY RANK AND DELIVER YOUR MESSAGE IN PROPER NAVAL TERMS!



WITH AN INWARD GRIN THE RED-HEADED RUSHTON COMPLIED IN HIS BEST SERVICE MANNER.

## Tide of War

COMMANDER BARKER COLDLY TOOK THE CORRECTED MESSAGE AND SNAPPED AN ALTERED COURSE DOWN THE VOICE PIPE. NOT BY A FLICKER DID HE BETRAY HIS IMPATIENCE AT THE CALL TO LOOK FOR A STRAY SHIP . . .

STEP LIVELY, NUMBER ONE, AND SEE TO IT THAT EVERY MAN STAYS AT HIS POST .

I WAS HOPING THE PORT WATCH COULD STAND DOWN, SIR — THEY'VE HAD NO SLEEP SINCE —



BUT THE COMMANDER BRUSQUELY DISMISSED HIS SUGGESTION AND RUSH FOUND HE NEEDED ALL THE POPULARITY HE ENJOYED AMONGST THE MEN TO KEEP FRAYED TEMPERS IN HAND, ESPECIALLY WITH THE DOG-TIRED PORT WATCH . . .

STAY ON READINESS!  
BLOW ME!

WE AIN'T HAD ANY  
DECENT SLEEP FOR THIRTY  
HOURS, SIR!

SORRY,  
LADS!



ON HIS ROUNDS, RUSH MET DOUGLAS NEWMAN, THE SHIP'S YOUNG SURGEON OFFICER. FROM THE START, RUSH HAD FELT DRAWN TO THE QUIET-SPOKEN KENTISH MAN WITH HIS EVEN TEMPER AND GRAVELY HUMOROUS MANNER.



INEVITABLY, THE SUBJECT OF THEIR CAPTAIN CROPPED UP...



FOR SEVERAL HOURS THE DAGGER STEAMED EASTWARD, SEARCHING IN VAIN FOR THE OTHER SHIP. ALREADY SMARTING UNDER THE SHAMEFUL RETREAT FROM SINGAPORE, COMMANDER BARKER FELT THE COLD FLAME OF HATRED HE HAD FOR THE JAPANESE INCREASING . . .



ONE DAY HE WOULD GET THE CHANCE TO HIT BACK, AND HE WOULD DO IT WITH CALCULATED THOROUGHNESS.

SUDDENLY A LOOK-OUT'S CRY CUT THE AIR . . . BUT TOO LATE TO AVOID THE TORPEDO WHICH SLAMMED INTO THE SHIP'S STERN . . .



THE EXPLOSION CARRIED AWAY THE STEERING AND WRENCHED OPEN PLATES. ALARMS JANGLED AS THE HUNGRY WATER POURED IN.

THEN . . .



SUCH WAS THE DIN OF ALARM BELLS THAT ONLY A FEW, INCLUDING THE FIRST LIEUTENANT, HEARD THE DESPERATE CRY. RACING AFT, RUSH SAW WITH RELIEF THAT DOUGLAS HAD MANAGED TO GRAB A LIFELINE BUT HE LOOKED DAZED.

GET ME A LIFE-BELT, QUICK,  
I'M GOING IN AFTER HIM.



BUT EVEN AS RUSH TORE AT HIS JACKET A TELEPHONE RANG. IT WAS FROM THE BRIDGE . . .

DEPTH CHARGES! WITH MISTER NEWMAN DOWN THERE IN THE WATER!



ON THE BRIDGE, COMMANDER BARKER HAD NO EARS FOR ANYTHING BUT THE RINGING OF THE ASDIC UNDER-WATER DETECTOR. THE NOTE WAS GROWING FASTER, TELLING HIM OF THE SUBMARINE'S FURTIVE APPROACH . . .

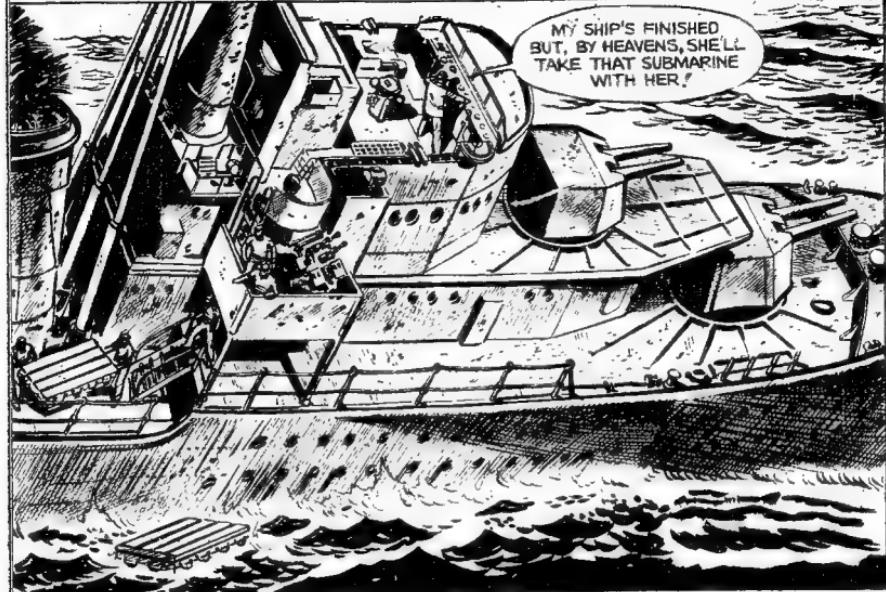


'AS RUSH STORMED TOWARDS THE BRIDGE, HE NATURALLY THOUGHT BARKER KNEW OF NEWMAN'S DANGER AND YET WAS STILL COLD-BLOODEDLY INTENT ON DEPTH CHARGING . . .



## Tide of War

COMMANDER BARKER'S EYES WERE GLEAMING WITH SAVAGE SATISFACTION.  
THE ENEMY SUBMARINE WAS ALMOST WITHIN RANGE . . .



NOW ! THIS WAS THE MOMENT !  
COMMANDER BARKER GRABBED  
THE TELEPHONE TO BARK THE  
FIRE ORDER . . .



BUT BEFORE HE COULD GIVE THE COMMAND,  
A ROUGH HAND SPUN HIM ROUND . . . AND HE  
FOUND HIMSELF STARING INTO THE ANGRY  
FACE OF HIS FIRST LIEUTENANT.

NO, YOU DON'T!  
PUT THAT PHONE DOWN!



YOU'RE NOT GOING  
TO KILL NEWMAN!

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME!  
ARE YOU MAD?



BARKER WRENCHED AWAY. HE HAD TO GIVE THE FIRE ORDER—NOW—OR THE SUBMARINE WOULD ESCAPE.

GET AWAY,  
YOU FOOL! THE  
SUBMARINE ... AAAGH!



THEN COMMANDER BARKER CRASHED TO THE DECK  
AS RUSHTON'S FIST THUDDED AGAINST HIS JAW...

WHY... YOU  
... HIT ME!  
YOUR SUPERIOR  
OFFICER!



## Tide of War

LEAVING BARKER TO STRUGGLE TO HIS FEET, RUSH RACED AWAY TO SAVE HIS FRIEND. AN INSTANT LATER, THE SHIP GAVE ANOTHER LURCH ... AND A WHITE-FACED RATING APPEARED ON THE SLOPING BRIDGE.



THEN, FOR THE FIRST TIME, BARKER... TOOK IN THE HEELING SHIP. IT COULD ONLY BE A MATTER OF MINUTES. HE NODDED ASSENT AND THE RATING YELLED INTO THE TANNOY!



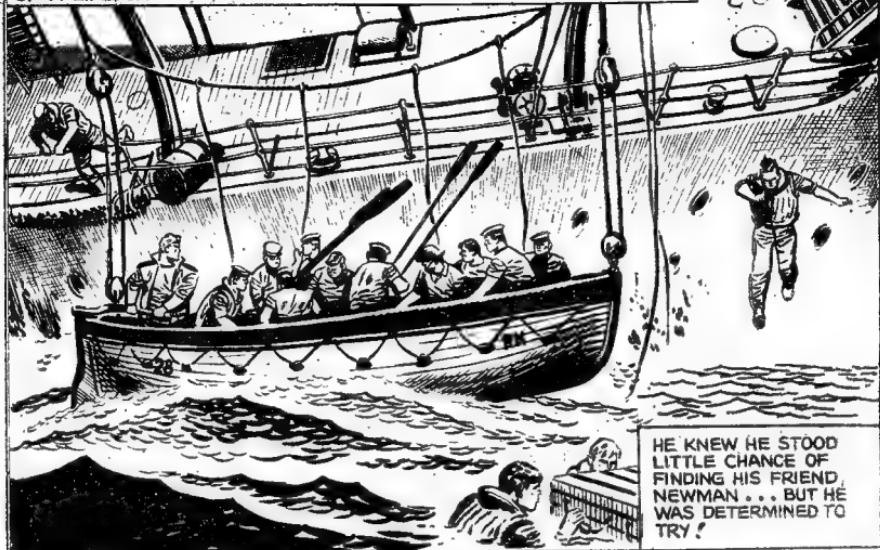
AS THE BLOOD-CHILLING COMMAND RANG OUT ALONG THE SWILLING DECKS, MEN FLUNG THEMSELVES INTO THE WATER TO GRASP FRANTICALLY AT THE FLOATS. OTHERS PILED INTO LIFEBOATS - ALL WAS DESPERATE HASTE TO GET AWAY BEFORE THE DOOMED SHIP MADE ITS FINAL PLUNGE.



## Tide of War

13

ON HEARING THE CRY TO ABANDON, RUSH QUICKLY TOOK OVER COMMAND OF A LIFEBOAT.



HE KNEW HE STOOD LITTLE CHANCE OF FINDING HIS FRIEND, NEWMAN . . . BUT HE WAS DETERMINED TO TRY !

WITH MEN CLINGING TO THE SIDES OF THE WHALER, RUSH STEERED AROUND THE STERN OF THE STRICKEN DESTROYER . . . BUT THE SEA WAS EMPTY .



TWILIGHT CAME AND THEN THE SWIFT  
TROPICAL NIGHT. DAWN FOUND THEM ALONE  
ON A RISING SEA. A SQUALLING WIND  
TESTED RUSH'S SEAMANSHIP TO THE FULL.

DOWN SAIL!  
THROW OUT THE  
SEA-ANCHOR! WE'LL  
RIDE THIS OUT!



TWO, AND THEN THREE DAYS WENT BY.  
RUSH HANDLED THE BOAT WELL, DOLED  
OUT THE RATIONS, AND KEPT DISCIPLINE.  
THE MEN TRUSTED HIM FOR THEY KNEW  
HE WAS A FIGHTER—WHilst they were  
still afloat, he would strive doggedly  
to make a landfall.



AND RUSH JUSTIFIED THE MEN'S FAITH. THREE DAYS LATER, THEY REACHED LAND AND WERE FOLLOWING A SMALL COASTAL PACKET INTO BANDATANG, BORNEO, THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILES EAST OF SINGAPORE.



BUT THEIR SMILES DIED WHEN THEY SAW THAT JAP BOMBING HAD REDUCED THE ONCE PROSPEROUS HARBOUR TO A SHAMBLES! EVERYWHERE THEY LOOKED THEY SAW THE LITTER OF AN ARMY IN RETREAT.



## Tide of War

STIFF AND HUNGRY BUT GLAD TO FEEL SOLID EARTH ONCE MORE, THE MEN TROOPED ASHORE. RUSH FINALLY FERRETED OUT A HARASSED TRANSPORT OFFICER WHO GAVE THEM DEPRESSING NEWS .

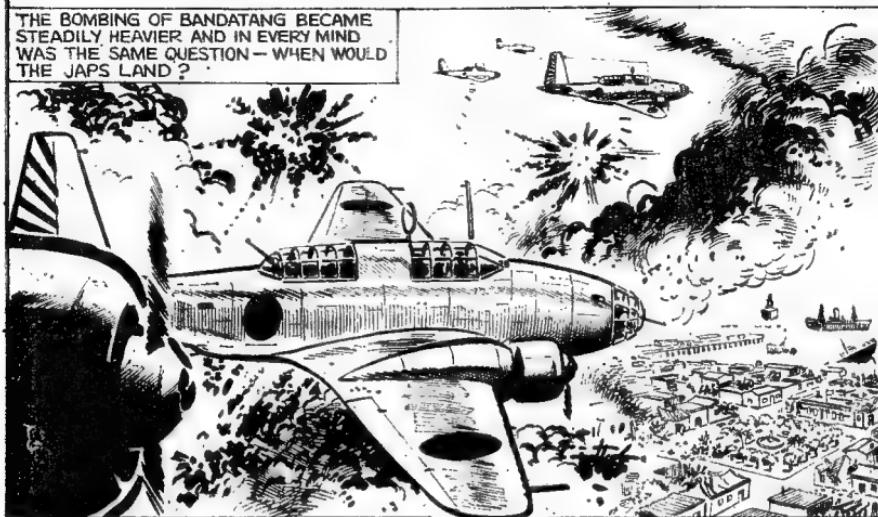


CAMP B PROVED TO BE AN OVERCROWDED COMPOUND WHERE EVERYONE WAITED LISTLESSLY FOR ORDERS. WITHIN FOUR DAYS, RUSH WAS FRETTING FOR ACTION ...



## Chapter 2, SHOCK ESCORT

THE BOMBING OF BANDATANG BECAME STEADILY HEAVIER AND IN EVERY MIND WAS THE SAME QUESTION - WHEN WOULD THE JAPS LAND?



THEN AN R.A.F. JEEP ARRIVED TO TAKE RUSH TO THE NAVAL HEADQUARTERS.

GOOD ACTION AT LAST, EH?



## Tide of War



FOR APART FROM CAPTAIN EDWARDS, THE ROOM ALSO CONTAINED THE FORBIDDING FIGURE OF... COMMANDER BARKER!



SAVE FOR THE LOSS OF SEVEN LIVES, THE COMPANY OF THE DAGGER HAS BEEN ACCOUNTED FOR. YOUR OWN CREDITABLE PART IN THIS SAVING OF LIFE IS NOT UNKNOWN TO US AND WILL BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.



AND THEN RUSH WAS TOLD JUST HOW SERIOUS THINGS WERE FOR HIM :

LIEUTENANT RUSHTON, THERE NOW REMAINS FOR ME TO TELL YOU THAT PENDING AN ENQUIRY, YOU ARE PLACED UNDER CLOSE ARREST. THE CHARGE IS - 'ASSAULTING A SUPERIOR OFFICER' ... TO WIT, YOUR CAPTAIN, COMMANDER BARKER .



THEN COMMANDER BARKER SPOKE, AND RUSH THOUGHT HE DETECTED A MALICIOUS HUMOUR IN THE OTHER'S WORDS . . .

AS IS THE CUSTOM IN THESE CASES YOU WILL BE CONFINED TO QUARTERS UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF A BROTHER OFFICER, UNTIL YOU ARE REQUIRED.



## Tide of War

CAPTAIN EDWARDS JABBED AT THE BELL ON HIS DESK AND ANOTHER OFFICER WAS USHERED IN . . .

HERE IS YOUR  
ESCORT, RUSHTON !



RUSH TURNED AND BLINKED IN WONDER:  
IT WAS DOUGLAS NEWMAN... .

SWALLOWING HIS DELIGHT AT THE SIGHT OF HIS FRIEND, RUSH REMAINED AT ATTENTION WHILE THEY LISTENED SOLEMNLY TO THE CAPTAIN'S FINAL WORDS . . .

LIEUTENANT RUSHTON, HERE, IS ON A SERIOUS CHARGE . YOU, NEWMAN, WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS CUSTODY. DO NOT LET HIM OUT OF YOUR SIGHT UNTIL SENT FOR. UNDERSTOOD ?

I UNDERSTAND,  
SIR .



## Tide of War

21

ONCE OUTSIDE THE OFFICE, THE TWO FRIENDS GREETED EACH OTHER JOYFULLY. FOR A MOMENT ALL TROUBLE WAS FORGOTTEN.

I GOT PICKED UP BY THE OTHER BOAT - SO DID BARKER - JUST AS THE OLD DAGGER WENT DOWN. THEN WE WERE SPOTTED BY A TROOPSHIP AND WERE BROUGHT HERE.

IT'S WONDERFUL TO SEE YOU, YOU OLD BONE-MONGER! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU? I SEARCHED...



BUT THEIR FIRST DELIGHT SOON GAVE PLACE TO MISGIVINGS...

BARKER'S OUT TO BREAK YOU. BUT I'VE ALSO TALKED TO THE CREW. IT SEEMS YOU SAVED MY LIFE, AND GOT YOURSELF INTO THIS TROUBLE DOING IT.

SO BARKER PURPOSELY PICKED ON YOU TO BE MY GAOLER. I CALL THAT A TWISTED SORT OF HUMOUR.



OUTSIDE, THE SAME R.A.F. JEEP STOOD WAITING . . .

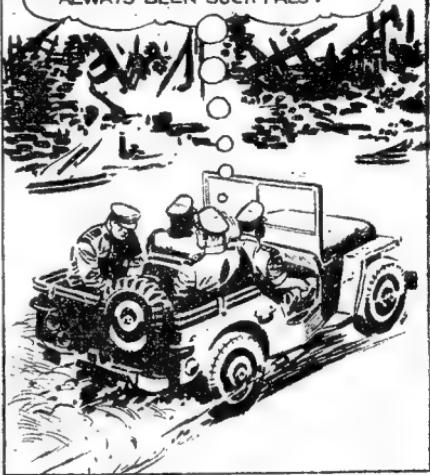
I DIDN'T TWIG I WAS UNDER POLICE GUARD WHEN THESE BIRDS BROUGHT ME HERE.

THEY'RE WILLIS AND FOSTER. THEY'LL TAKE US TO MY QUARTERS.

TO MY PRISON, YOU MEAN!

AS THEY SPED AWAY, RUSH REALISED THAT HIS FRIEND WAS ACUTELY EMBARRASSED BY THE SITUATION.

THIS IS MAKING THINGS DARNED AWKWARD FOR HIM—SEEING WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN SUCH PALS.



SECONDS LATER, THE AIR RAID SIRENS BEGAN THEIR BANSHEE WAILING.

STEP ON IT, WILLIS.

OKAY, SIR!



"THEN THE JEEP SKIDDED TO A HALT AS A WHISTLING SOUND GREW TO A SHRILL SCREAMING. ALL FOUR MEN SPRANG FOR COVER AS THE FIRST BOMBS FELL.



"THE STICK CRASHED DOWN . . . THEN ANOTHER ! THEN A THIRD BROUGHT DOWN A CASCADE OF MASONRY AROUND THEIR HEADS . . .



THROUGH THE RUMBLE OF FALLING BRICKWORK, RUSH HEARD THE OTHERS CALLING HIM. HIS EYE FELL ON THE JEEP STANDING THERE INVITINGLY AND SUDDENLY A WILD URGE TO ESCAPE SEIZED HIM.

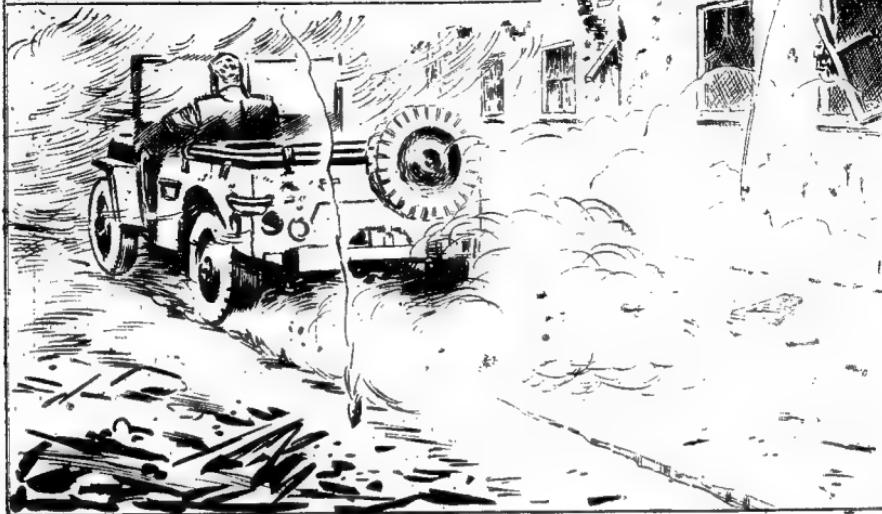


ONCE HAVING SEIZED ON A PLAN OF ACTION, IT WAS RUSH'S WAY TO ACT. IN A MOMENT HE WAS REVVING THE JEEP INTO LIFE AND ROARING DOWN THE STREET.

... AND I'LL BET DOUGLAS WILL BE PLEASED TO HAVE ME OFF HIS HANDS — AND OFF HIS CONSCIENCE!



HE THOUGHT THE SWIRLING DUST WOULD SCREEN HIS GETAWAY BUT HE DID NOT KNOW THAT HIS ENGINE SUMP, FRACTURED BY FALLEN RUBBLE, WAS LEAVING A TRAIL OF OIL.



IF RUSH THOUGHT HIS IMPETUOUS ACTION WAS DOING DOUGLAS NEWMAN A GOOD TURN, HE WAS MISTAKEN.

MISTER RUSHTON HAS TAKEN THE JEEP, SIR!

SHALL I FIRE AT THE TYRES, SIR?

NO! WE'LL GET HIM! HE CAN'T GET FAR!



... SILENTLY, THE YOUNG SURGEON CURSED RUSH FOR A HOT-HEADED FOOL ...



HE HAD LEFT THE TOWN AND SIGHTED THE HILLS WHEN HIS OVERHEATED ENGINE, STARVED OF OIL, SEIZED SOLID. IMPATIENTLY, RUSH PUSHED THE USELESS VEHICLE INTO HIDING..



THEN HE MADE TOWARDS THE JUNGLE-COVERED HILLS . . .

MAYBE I CAN WORK ROUND TO THE COMPOUND AGAIN AND GO INTO HIDING THERE .

BUT WITH HIS ROUTE BETRAYED BY THE THIN LINE OF OIL, THE FUGITIVE WAS SOON TRAILED.

WE WERE RIGHT, SIR . . . HE'S SEIZED UP THE ENGINE .

RUSH, YOU IDIOT, HAVE I GOT TO HUNT YOU DOWN ?

## Chapter 3 THE FUGITIVE

SURGEON LIEUTENANT NEWMAN LOST NO TIME IN OBTAINING A NATIVE TRACKER, AND AS THEY FOLLOWED RUSH'S TRAIL, HE REFLECTED ON HIS UNENVIABLE TASK OF HUNTING DOWN HIS FRIEND.



BUT THE YOUNG OFFICER WAS CLEAR ABOUT ONE THING - HE WAS GOING AFTER RUSH, NOT BECAUSE IT WAS HIS DUTY, BUT BECAUSE IT WOULD BE THE BEST THING FOR RUSH.

HE DID NOT KNOW THAT IN THE TOWN, THE BOMBING HAD CEASED AND A NEW AND MORE TERRIBLE MENACE HAD ARRIVED . . .



RUSH SOON HEARD HIS PURSUERS  
CRASHING THROUGH THE JUNGLE  
BEHIND HIM . . .

YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR  
FOR SECOND THOUGHTS NOW, RUSH  
OLD LAD - SO PUSH ON,  
REGARDLESS!



BREAKING COVER HIGHER UP IN THE HILLS  
HE CAUGHT A FIRST GLIMPSE OF HIS  
HUNTERS . . .

DOUGLAS, EH? HE  
SHOULD'VE LET ME GET  
AWAY, THE CHUMP!



## Tide of War

IMPATIENT AT HIS FRIEND'S CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, RUSH TOOK TO A STREAM, HOPING TO SMOOTHER HIS TRACKS.



BUT THE NATIVE TRACKER WAS NOT BAFFLED FOR LONG!



THE FUGITIVE SCRAMBLED ON . . . STILL DRIVEN BY IMPULSE RATHER THAN REASON . . .

HE PLUNGED ONCE MORE INTO THE LEAFY GREEN HUMIDITY OF THE JUNGLE, BUT A SUDDEN CRASHING IN THE TREES CLOSE BY MADE RUSH SPIN IN STARTLED SURPRISE.



THE JAP WAS ABRUPTLY CAUGHT UP BY HIS HARNESS AND DANGED IN MID-AIR, KICKING AND PLUNGING.



## Tide of War

THEN, THE SOUNDS OF VOICES CAME FROM THE DISTANCE AND THE JAP'S STRUGGLES CEASED AT ONCE - HIS BODY TENSED ALERTLY...



REALISING THE OTHER MEN'S PERIL, RUSH HESITATED A SPLIT SECOND, WEIGHING THE CHANCES - A WARNING SHOUT WOULD FINISH HIS BID FOR FREEDOM, YET TO STAND SILENT AND SEE THAT GUN AIMED MURDEROUSLY...



THE CRY RANG THROUGH THE FOREST AND SENT NEWMAN DARTING TOWARDS THE BEND, TAKING THE ARMED WILLIS WITH HIM. FOSTER HUGGED THE OPPOSITE BANK.



THE ECHOES OF RUSH'S WARNING SHOUT WERE DROWNED IN THE RATTLE OF A SUB-MACHINE GUN AS THE JAP OPENED FIRE ON DOUGLAS NEWMAN AND HIS MEN...



...AND SEIZING HIS OPPORTUNITY, RUSH SPRINTED TOWARDS THE JAP.

BY THE TIME THE OTHERS ARRIVED ON THE SCENE, THE JAP PARATROOPER HAD MANAGED TO FREE HIMSELF FROM HIS HARNESS... AND WAS LOCKED IN A DESPERATE STRUGGLE WITH RUSH.



THEN FOSTER'S GUN CRACKED... EVEN AS THE JAP HAD HIS ATTACKER AT HIS MERCY.



FOR ALL HIS RELIEF, DOUGLAS NEWMAN STILL INTENDED TO CARRY OUT HIS DUTIES - AND RUSH ACCEPTED THE SITUATION WITH AN IRONIC GRIN.

THANKS FOR THE WARNING, RUSH - BUT I'VE STILL GOT TO TAKE YOU BACK. IT WILL ONLY MAKE THINGS WORSE, RUNNING AWAY.

OKAY, GAOLER!  
I'LL COME  
QUIETLY!



THE LITTLE PARTY RETURNED TO BANDATANG TO BE MET BY SOUNDS OF BATTLE AROUND THE HARBOUR. THE SURGEON LIEUTENANT FELT THE OTHERS' EYES ON HIM AS IF EXPECTING A DECISION.

WE STILL HAVE TO TRY  
TO REPORT BACK. WHAT  
ELSE CAN WE DO?



## Tide of War

WITH THE CRACK OF RIFLE FIRE AND THE ECHOING THUMP OF DEMOLITIONS EVER IN THEIR EARS, THEY SCRAMBLED OVER RUBBLE BACK TO THE TOWN HALL. BUT THE PLACE WAS A DESERTED WRECK.

WHERE ARE NAVY MEN?

ALL GONE. EVERYONE THEY GO.



DOUGLAS NEWMAN, UNUSED TO EVENTS OF SUCH VIOLENCE, FELT THE SITUATION GETTING BEYOND HIM. IT WAS RUSH, THE FIGHTER BY TRAINING AND INSTINCT, WHO HAD THE ANSWER.

WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE, DOUGLAS - BACK TO THE HILLS, THE FOUR OF US.

IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE, SIR! NO GOOD THINKING OF A BOAT!



GATHERING ALL THE FOOD AND WEAPONS THEY COULD CARRY, THE FOUR SLIPPED SAFELY OUT OF THE BURNING TOWN AND BACK INTO THE FOREST. IN THE DARK HOURS OF THE NIGHT, THE TWO FRIENDS TALKED THINGS OVER . . .

A RUM BUSINESS.  
DOUGLAS. YOU, GAOLER,  
ME, PRISONER - BOTH ON  
THE RUN! HOW DO YOU  
FEEL ABOUT IT?

I TOOK YOU  
BACK, RUSH - THAT  
SATISFIES MY  
CONSCIENCE FOR  
THE TIME  
BEING.



BUT SUPPOSE WE MEET UP WITH THE NAVY AGAIN - WHAT THEN?

I'D HAVE TO HAND YOU OVER, RUSH,  
AND HELP YOU FIGHT THIS CHARGE.  
YOU CAN'T DODGE IT FOREVER.



RUSH BELIEVED HIM. BUT A HALF MOCKING GRIN  
WARNED DOUGLAS NOT TO EXPECT MUCH ASSISTANCE.

IT WAS PLAIN THAT THE JAPS INTENDED TO DO MORE THAN MERELY SNATCH BANDATANG FROM ALLIED HANDS. THE PORT WAS TO BE USED AS A BEACH-HEAD — ALREADY REINFORCEMENTS AND SUPPLIES WERE POURING INTO THE LITTLE HARBOUR.



THE FOUR CONSIDERED THEIR POSITION. FACED BY A COMMON PERIL, THERE WAS AN UNSPOKEN AGREEMENT TO FORGET FOR THE MOMENT THEIR STRANGE RELATIONSHIP — RUSH THE CAPTIVE AND THE OTHERS HIS CAPTORS. IN FACT HE WAS ACCEPTED AS THEIR NATURAL LEADER ...

I SUGGEST WE MAKE FOR TEBANGI. IT'S TWO HUNDRED MILES OF JUNGLE AWAY BUT I RECKON WE COULD DO IT.

H'MM!  
WE'D NEED MORE FOOD ...



LEAVE THE GRUB TO ME AND FOSTER SIR!

WE'LL NIP BACK INTO TOWN AND KNOCK OFF AS MUCH AS WE CAN CARRY!



AND FOR THE FIRST TIME THE YOUNG SURGEON BECAME TRULY AWARE OF THE STERLING QUALITIES OF THESE TWO BRAWNY AIRMEN!

BUT RUSH THOUGHT THAT THEY SHOULD DO THE JOB TOGETHER, SO THAT NIGHT ...

RICE! NOT ME!

WONDER WHAT THIS IS ... ANYBODY READ JAPANESE?

WHIP IT AND TAKE A CHANCE!





## Chapter 4. SABOTEURS

MODESTLY AT FIRST, AND THEN WITH GROWING BOLDNESS,  
THEY CARRIED OUT DARING NIGHT RAIDS ON ENEMY ARMS  
AND FOOD DUMPS, USING THE ENEMY'S OWN EXPLOSIVES  
AND THE NATURAL WEAPONS OF FLAME AND WATER.



## Tide of War

JAPANESE GUARD PATROLS WERE STRENGTHENED IN THE AREA AND ONE PARTICULARLY DARING RAID ON FRESHLY LANDED SUPPLY TRUCKS NEARLY ENDED IN DISASTER.

LET'S GET OUT,  
RUSH - THERE'S MORE  
JAPS COMING!



AFTER THAT, IT WAS DECIDED NOT TO PUSH THEIR LUCK ANY FURTHER BUT TO START OUT FOR DISTANT TEBANGI ON THE SOUTHERN COAST.

THERE'S JUST A CHANCE THE JAPS HAVEN'T GOT THERE YET.

LET'S HOPE WE CAN SCROUNCE A BOAT.



FOUR NIGHTS LATER FOUND THEM FOOTSORE BUT UNDAUNTED PERCHED ON THE HIGH COLD RIDGE OF THE SANGAMO RANGE, MANY JUNGLE MILES YET TO THEIR DESTINATION. ONCE MORE RUSH VENTURED THE QUESTION WHICH DOUGLAS NEWMAN HAD HOPED TO AVOID . . .

SUPPOSE WE MEET THE NAVY AT TEBANGI, DOUGLAS - ARE YOU STILL GOING TO TURN ME OVER ?

I TOLD YOU BEFORE, RUSH - IT'S BEST IN THE LONG RUN. YOU'LL HAVE TO FACE IT SOMETIME.



THE DAYS AND NIGHTS MERGED INTO ONE LONG GRUELING FIGHT AGAINST HEAT AND COLD, FATIGUE AND SORES. EACH MAN WAS ON EDGE - LIABLE TO JUMP AT A SHADOW . . .

RUSH, LOOK! MEN MOVING! JAPS!

TAKE IT EASY, BOY, TAKE IT EASY. IT'S JUST TREES!





AFTER CAREFUL OBSERVATION,  
THEY SET OUT ONE NIGHT FOR  
THEIR MOST AMBITIOUS JOB  
YET — TO FIRE THE OILWELL.  
WITH PLANNED SMOOTHNESS,  
THE SENTRIES WERE DEALT  
WITH ONE BY ONE .



WHILE THE OTHERS STOOD GUARD, RUSH SECURED A HOME-MADE EXPLOSIVE TO A MAIN OIL PIPE . . .

THIS SHOULD DO THE TRICK!



A RIVER OF LIQUID FIRE SPURTING IN ALL DIRECTIONS FROM THE FRACTURED PIPE AND THE SABOTEURS TOOK TO THEIR HEELS.



BUT THE LEAPING FLAMES STARKLY SILHOUETTED THE FLEEING BRITISH . . .



RUSH BIT ON A CRY AS A BULLET SEARED INTO HIS THIGH. SICK WITH PAIN, HE FORCED HIMSELF ON, STRAINING TO REACH THE SANCTUARY OF THE DARK JUNGLE.

QUICK, RUSH! WHY—WHAT'S UP?

I'M COMING.

THE SOUND OF PURSUIT FILLED THE AIR AS DOUGLAS TURNED BACK TO HELP HIS FRIEND . . .

YOU TWO KEEP GOING. I'LL TAKE CARE OF MISTER RUSHTON.



IN THE NICK OF TIME, NEWMAN SCRAMBLED RUSH INTO HIDING, STIFLING THE WOUNDED MAN'S INVOLUNTARY GASPS OF PAIN AS JAP FEET PADDED BY.



WHEN ALL SEEMED QUIET, THE YOUNG SURGEON BOUND UP RUSH'S LEG WITH BANDAGES TORN FROM HIS OWN SHIRT.

LUCKILY THE BULLET WENT RIGHT THROUGH, RUSH. YOU'LL BE OKAY!

GOOD OLD GAOLER! BRINGING ME BACK DEAD OR ALIVE, EH?

DAWN WAS BREAKING AS THE TWO MEN STUMBLLED BACK INTO CAMP.  
THEY WERE GREETED WARMLY BY THE TWO MILITARY POLICEMEN...



## Chapter 5. TASK FORCE

WHEN RUSH'S LEG PERMITTED, THEY BEGAN THE LONG TREK UP THE EASTERN COAST OF BORNEO. BUT REDUCED TO MINIMUM RATIONS AND SUFFERING FROM FATIGUE, EACH MILE WAS A TANGLED NIGHTMARE . . .



YET IT SEEMED THAT THE PRIVATION DREW THE FOUR MEN EVEN CLOSER IN SPIRIT SO THAT EACH DREW STRENGTH AND SUPPORT FROM THE OTHERS . . .

THE DAYS PASSED AS THEY WORKED UP THE COAST, FOREVER DODGING ISOLATED ENEMY PATROLS AND SEARCHING WITH BUT SMALL HOPE FOR A BOAT. THEN FORTUNE SEEMED TO SMILE ON THEM . . .

A SHIP'S LIFEBOAT —  
MUST HAVE BEEN WASHED  
UP FROM A WRECK. IF IT  
HAD A SAIL I COULD REALLY  
GET YOU FELLOWS  
SOMEWHERE . . .

THEN WE'LL  
MAKE A  
SAIL !

I'LL CHANCE THE  
SEA RATHER THAN THAT  
PERISHING JUNGLE . . .  
OR THE JAPS !



THEY RESTED UP BEFORE DIGGING THE LIFEBOAT OUT OF THE SANDS - AND PROVISIONED IT WITH A QUANTITY OF FRESH FRUIT AND NUTS. THEN, ON A MOONLESS NIGHT . . .



A SUDDEN STACCATO VOLLEY OF RIFLE FIRE SHOCKED THEM INTO LIVING STATUES STARING AGHAST INTO THE DIMNESS ALONG THE BEACH . . .



## Tide of War

RUSH'S COMMAND HAD BARELY LEFT HIS LIPS WHEN BURSTS OF ANSWERING FIRE CAME CRACKLING FROM OFF SHORE. IN SECONDS, THE EXCHANGE OF FIRE HAD QUICKENED INTO A SPIRITED BATTLE AS JAPANESE SOLDIERS CHALLENGED THE BOATS HEADING FOR THE SHORE.





ALL BOATS SPUN ABOUT, THEIR CREWS FRANTICALLY PULLING OUT OF RANGE. BUT ONE WAS HOLED AND SANK, LEAVING CURSING MEN TO SWIM AFTER THE OTHER BOATS. BUT THERE WAS ONE MAN WHO THRASHED AND FLOUNDERED, PLAINLY IN TROUBLE, YET UTTERING NO CRY.



## Tide of War

RUSH WAS THE FIRST TO SPOT THE STRUGGLING MAN, AND URGING THE OTHERS TO A SUPREME EFFORT, MANAGED TO GET THE BOAT LAUNCHED WITHOUT THE JAPS SEEING THEM. PUTTING THEIR WEIGHT BEHIND THE OARS, THEY PLOUGHED THROUGH THE WATER TOWARDS THE AUSTRALIAN .



AS THEY TURNED TO FOLLOW THE OTHER BOATS, THE AUSTRALIAN TOLD THEM EXCITING NEWS .

THERE'S A WHOLE FORCE OUT THERE IN SHIPS WAITING TO INVADE. WE WERE AN ADVANCE BEACH PARTY SUPPOSED TO GUIDE IN THE MAIN LANDINGS .





TWO HOURS LATER, THEY SIGHTED THE INVASION FORCE AND AT THE AUSTRALIAN'S DIRECTIONS MADE FOR THE FLAGSHIP.



QUESTIONED BY SUCCESSIVE OFFICERS, RUSH AND THE SURGEON LIEUTENANT FINALLY FOUND THEMSELVES BEFORE A BURLY ADMIRAL WHO PLIED THEM WITH EVEN MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BORNEO COASTLINE. THEN HE SEEMED TO COME TO A DECISION.

WE ALREADY KNOW SOMETHING OF THIS OTHER BEACH YOU SPEAK OF BUT NO DETAILED KNOWLEDGE. HOW ABOUT YOU TWO LEADING ANOTHER BEACH PARTY TO SHOW OUR MEN? WE'LL HAVE TO ACT FAST.



RUSH'S SILENCE BROUGHT AN ENQUIRING LOOK FROM THE ADMIRAL; THEN AS HIS FRIEND SPOKE, DOUGLAS' HEART SANK.

I... I UNDERSTAND YOU'VE PICKED UP SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE BRITISH NAVY, SIR. I - I THINK I SHOULD REPORT TO THEM FIRST!



BUT THE ADMIRAL HAD NO THOUGHT BUT FOR THE IMMEDIATE TASK OF INVASION . . .

SORRY, RUSHTON, BUT THOSE OFFICERS ARE ABOARD ANOTHER SHIP AND TIME'S AGAINST US. YOU'RE WORKING FOR ME AS FROM NOW! GET FED AND CLEANED UP - THEN REPORT HERE IN THIRTY MINUTES FOR ANOTHER BRIEFING.



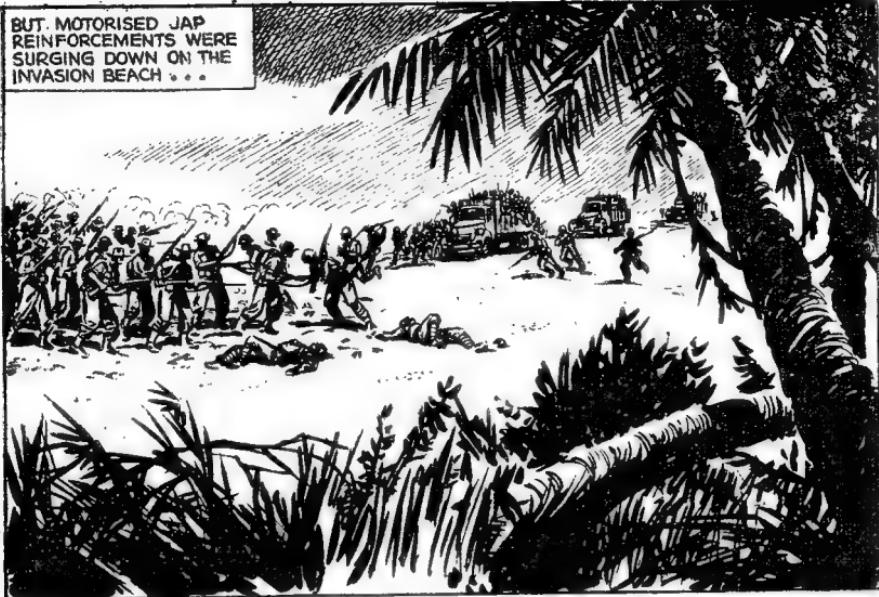


AS RUSH HAD PREDICTED, THE BEACH WAS CLEAR OF JAPS. SIGNAL LIGHTS WINKED BACK AT THE FLEET - AND THE MAIN WAVE OF INVASION TROOPS SWEEPED SHOREWARDS.





BUT MOTORISED JAP REINFORCEMENTS WERE SURGING DOWN ON THE INVASION BEACH . . .



IT SEEMED THAT THE SMALL BEACH LANDING PARTY WOULD BE WIPE OUT, WHEN, A HAIL OF BULLETS RIPPED INTO THE JAPS FROM THE SEA . . .



. . . THE MAIN INVASION FORCE HAD ARRIVED . . .

RUSH'S PANTING, EXHAUSTED GROUP WERE QUITE WILLING TO LET THE MAIN WAVE TAKE OVER THE FIGHT . . .

AFTER THE PERISHERS!

GIVE 'EM BLAZES!



THEN ABOVE THE DIN OF THE RETREATING BATTLE, RUSH HEARD A FAMILIAR VOICE. HE SPUN ROUND... THERE STOOD CAPTAIN EDWARDS, THE MAN WHO HAD PUT HIM UNDER ARREST.

HULLO, RUSHTON, I IMAGINE YOU'RE MORE SURPRISED THAN I AM. I'VE HEARD ALL ABOUT YOU AND NEWMAN HERE. SEEMS YOU'VE DONE A GREAT JOB OF WORK.



CAPTAIN EDWARDS TOLD TREM BRIEFLY OF HIS ESCAPE FROM BANDATANG.  
THEN . . .

BUT COMMANDER BARKER WAS, I REGRET TO SAY, KILLED DURING OUR ESCAPE. NOW, A COURT-MARTIAL IS ALWAYS AN UNPLEASANT THING — AND OUT OF RESPECT FOR COMMANDER BARKER, AND BECAUSE OF YOUR OWN EXEMPLARY CONDUCT, RUSHTON, I AM DROPPING THE CHARGE AGAINST YOU. IN ANY CASE, I'M SURE YOU'VE LEARNED YOUR LESSON . . . AND YOU SEEM TOO GOOD A FIGHTING MAN TO SPEND THE REST OF THE WAR IN THE JUG!



FREED IN SUCH AN UNEXPECTED MANNER FROM THE LONG BURDEN OF THEIR FEARS, THE TWO FRIENDS TURNED AGAIN TO WATCH THE INVASION WHICH THEY HAD HELPED SO MUCH TO LAUNCH . . .



A COUNTER-STROKE THAT WAS THE FORERUNNER OF MANY THAT WERE TO STEM THE TIDE OF JAPANESE CONQUESTS AND IN TIME WOULD BRING THE ONCE INVINCIBLE NIPPONENE EMPIRE PLUNGING TO DEFEAT .

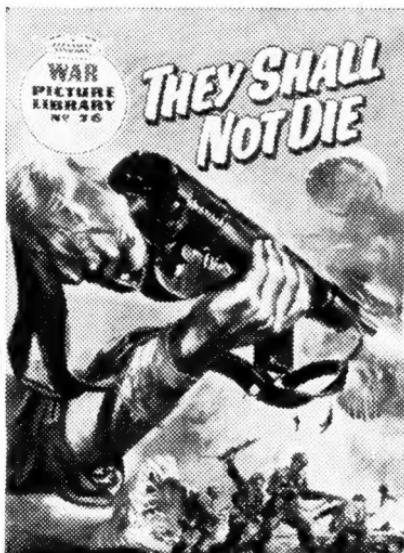
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